

Frank & Jack & Sam & Judy

By William Safire

WASHINGTON—In late 1975, a fascinating story that had been carefully buried on page six of The Washington Post, ignored by the national media when covered by the Scripps-Howard newspapers and brushed aside in a footnote by the Senate committee investigating the C.I.A., was given serious treatment in this space.

The story was about the close relationship between President John F. Kennedy and a beautiful woman who was also the friend of Sam Giancana and John Roselli, Mafia bosses who had been hired by the C.I.A. to murder Fidel Castro.

Now more details of that hard-to-believe connection are available in "Judith Exner. My Story," a Grove Press book I picked up the other day over the counter in a bookstore.

Mrs. Exner's self-serving confession, as told to Orid Demaris, will be dismissed as distasteful, seedy, unnecessarily sensational, unfairly selective, salaciously gossipy, perhaps psychologically sick. All of which it is.

But there is a core of checkable truth to this story that exposes—for the first time from near the inside—the cancerous connective tissue that exists, apparently to this day, between the underworld, show business and politics.

Mrs. Exner, then Judy Campbell, says she first met Frank Sinatra on Nov. 10, 1959, upon his invitation to spend a weekend with him in Hawaii. For more than a year, she was one of Frank's girls, part of the rat-pack section of the Hollywood crowd. On Feb. 7, 1960, she was invited to Las Vegas by Mr. Sinatra, and in Dean Martin's hotel suite found herself being introduced to Presidential candidate John F. Kennedy. Mr. Sinatra was evidently not possessive; Mrs. Exner says her affair with Mr. Kennedy began in New York on March 7, 1960, the eve of the New Hampshire primary.

The following week, Judy Exner flew to Miami at Mr. Sinatra's invitation. In his room was "Joe Fish"—Joseph Fischetti, brother of dead Mafiosi Charles and Rocco Fischetti, and cousin of Al Capone. She says that Mr. Sinatra, aware of her new Kennedy relationship, advised her: "Get with it. Swing a little."

On March 27, as she was still puzzling over Mr. Sinatra's admonition to "wake up and realize what you've got in the palm of your hand," the singer introduced her to a man he called "Sam Flood," one of the aliases of Momo Salvatore "Sam" Giancana, a mobster who in 1960 was undisputed boss of Chicago's underworld, with extensive gambling interests in Cuba.

Thus, with Mr. Sinatra as matchmaker, began the most strutting dual relationship in the history of crime and politics: For almost two years, one woman was simultaneously seeing the nation's most powerful mobster and the nation's most powerful political leader.

From the start, mobster Giancana knew exactly with whom he was sharing the young woman's affections. Since the appearance of power is a form of power, he was able to use his girlfriend's access to the Presidential candidate—and later to the White House itself—to make a lasting impression on his gangland associates.

Kennedy myth-protectors can no longer deny the relationship documented in dreary detail by Mrs. Exner and Government records, but insist that it was pure coincidence that the Mafia chief chosen by the C.I.A. to assassinate Fidel Castro was Giancana, along with another close friend of Mrs. Exner's, John Roselli.

Mrs. Exner denies she was the go-between in this plot but cites other

instances where entertainers like Jerry Lewis and Eddie Fisher, terrified of mob power, used her to pass messages to Giancana.

Great fun while it lasted, as the young woman accepted gifts from the Irish Mafia and the real Mafia, one day reciprocating: "They both smoked Schimmelpenninck cigars. . . . I went to a jeweler in Beverly Hills and had two solid gold cigar cases made and gave them each one."

But the piper had to be paid. Thanks to the Kennedys, she became a patient of the notorious "Dr. Feel-good," Dr. Max Jacobson, whose drug injections were exposed a few years ago by reporter Martin Tolchin. Thanks to Sam Giancana, she suffered close F.B.I. surveillance, and says she was sent to lawyer Sidney Korshak, whose mysterious showbiz-underworld links were exposed by reporter Seymour Hersh.

Skip the gossip and study the pattern that emerges: A series of links exist between underworld and political world through the world of show business.

At J. Edgar Hoover's behest, John Kennedy finally dropped her (she denies that); the reader can assume that because of her usefulness as a White House link ended, Mr. Giancana and Mr. Sinatra drifted away. Of Judy's friends, Jack Kennedy was shot, possibly in retaliation for Sam Giancana's Cuban efforts; Mr. Giancana was executed by the Mafia just before he was to testify; John Roselli was murdered afterward.

The lone survivor: the matchmaker, Ol' Blue-Eyes himself, Frank Sinatra. Thanks to an introduction by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wagner, the late Mr. Giancana's friend has been spending much time in the company of New York Gov. Hugh Carey, and is being sought for his help in raising funds for Mario Cuomo in his race for Mayor of New York.